THE ORTHODOX WORD

January - February 1075 *Ninety Cents*

ST. DOROTHY, SCHEMA-NUN OF KASHIN

THE ORTHODOX WORD

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COVER: "Schema-nun" — painting by S. Zhivotovsky, from the weekly *Russian Pilgrim*, 1906, no. 3.

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In Defense of Orthodoxy

EPISTLE OF METROPOLITAN PHILARET TO METR. IRENEY

Editors' Note: In connection with the Third All-Diaspora Council of the Russian Church Outside of Russia, Epistles were sent to the "Paris" and "American" Russian jurisdictions in the hope of the eventual restoration of unity in a single Russian Orthodox Church abroad. From "Paris" the response was cool, for, in the words of the reply of Bishop Alexander of this jurisdiction, "our understanding of the very foundations of church order, i.e., the Orthodox teaching of the Church (Ecclesiology) is different from yours." This jurisdiction strives first of all for "recognition" by other jurisdictions, and therefore it has no interest in union with a Church which is now largely "unrecognized" due to its outspoken epistles against the heresy of Ecumenism. The Epistle to the American Metropolia, however, met with greater favor, and Metr. Ireney replied with an appeal for the restoration of communion *without* any discussion of ecclesiological differences. The ecclesiastically-illiterate Russian press thereupon filled the air with talk of "peace" and "love" and "joint celebration." Metr. Philaret finally placed an end to this talk with the following Epistle. It was received with utter shock and amazement, both by Metr. Ireney and much of the Russian press — so foreign has the word of truth become to the lovers of the world. Doubtless it was by the prayers of Blessed Xenia that such an eloquent end — which might seem "foolish" to the "wise" of this world — was put to a "dialogue" that had become pointless.

YOUR EMINENCE!

OUR CORRESPONDENCE in the newspapers has come to a dead-end, and there is no point in continuing it. But I consider it necessary to reply to your latest letter.

Appealing to my conscience, you quote an excerpt from your previous letter and ask: where in it do I see a "pointed polemical approach"? I do not see any — in this excerpt. But you did not quote your whole letter, Your Eminence. In it there are entirely other thoughts and expressions.

Stubbornly avoiding the chief question which divides us, you insistently call for communion in prayer. What can one say? The renewal of such communion would be a great joy. But one can begin with it only when there are disagreements of a *personal* character. In such a case the matter is clear and simple: let there be peace, and we shall celebrate and pray together. But when there are disagreements on *principles*, in accordance with the words

of the Holy Church — "Let us love one another, that we may confess *in oneness of mind*" — then the attainment of such oneness of mind is required first. And only when it has been attained is the joy of this attainment crowned by joint prayer. Call to mind the historical conference of hierarchs — Metropolitan Eulogius, Metropolitan Theophilus, Metropolitan Anastassy, and Bishop Demetrius — which was called for the examination of the questions which concerned precisely the church divisions, just as in the present case. Then the hierarchs who conferred did not begin, but ended, their conference with a joint celebration.

And in general, in the history of the Church there has been no joint celebration without oneness of mind. This latter is a purely ecumenistic attainment of our days. "Love," understood according to ecumenistic thinking, opens wide to everyone and everything its "loving embraces," and these embraces are ready to strangle to death true Orthodoxy, burying it in the bosom of un-Orthodox ways of thinking. It is not for nothing, after all, that the Apostle of *love* says that a man who incorrectly speaks of the truth should not be received into the house, nor even greeted. For he who greets him participates in his evil deeds...

The chief question separating us is the question of the Soviet hierarchy. The Russian Church Outside of Russia will recognize it as the lawful and actual leadership of the suffering Russian Church only when, with all decisiveness, it renounces the disgraceful and frightful Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius, comes away from its ruinous path, and enters the path of church righteousness, openly and fearlessly defending it. The disgraceful stain must be washed away. And as long as this does not happen — it remains under the "omophorion" of the God-fighting regime, not daring to take a single step without its "blessing," especially in its activities abroad. This is clear even to a child!

Here I interrupt my letter in order to quote, word for word, what has been said on this question by Archbishop Andrew of Rockland, who for a long time performed his pastoral service in Soviet Russia and knows well all the nightmarishness of Soviet reality. Vladika said the following:

"I am reminded of an incident from the life of Blessed Xenia of Petersburg. She was especially popular among the merchant class. The merchants noticed that every visit by the Blessed one would bring them success in business.

"Once in a certain market place the merchants succeeded in obtaining from a wealthy estate a supply of several sorts of the best honey. There was honey from linden-blossoms, and from buckwheat, and also from other flowers and plants. Each one had its own special taste and fragrance. And when the merchants mixed all three kinds of honey together in one barrel, such a flavor and such a taste were produced as to be beyond one's wildest dreams. People bought this honey immediately, not sparing any sum of money. And suddenly Blessed Xenia appeared. 'Don't take it, don't take it,' she cried; 'this honey can't be eaten: it stinks of a corpse.' 'You've gone out of your mind, Matushka! Don't bother us! You see what a profit we are making. And how can you prove that this honey shouldn't be eaten?' — 'Here's how I'll prove it!'

screamed the Blessed one, leaned with all her might on the barrel, and... overturned it. While the honey was flowing on the sidewalk, people closely surrounded the barrel; but when all the honey had flowed out, everyone cried out in horror and revulsion; at the bottom of the barrel lay an immense dead rat. Even those who had bought this honey for a dear price and carried it away in jars, threw it out.

"Why did I recall this incident and quote it?" continued Vladika Andrew. "I will answer willingly. A few days ago an American who is interested in Orthodoxy and has been in almost all the Orthodox churches, both in the Soviet Union and here in America, asked me why I and a whole group of Russian Orthodox people were not participating in the reception of the Patriarchal delegation* and in general seem to shun everything bound up with church life in the Soviet Union, and even here, in America, avoid those Orthodox groups which somehow or other are bound up with the Patriarchate. What is the matter? Are not the dogmas the same, or are the Mysteries different, or is there a different Divine service? I thought, and replied 'No, that is not what it is. Both the faith and the Divine services are the same. The Orthodox faith is fragrant like good honey. But if you pour this honey into a barrel at the bottom of which there is a dead rat, would you want to taste this honey?' — He looked at me in horror. 'Well, of course not.' 'And so we likewise,' I replied to him, 'avoid everything bound up with Communism. Communism for us is the same thing as the dead rat at the bottom of the barrel. And if you would fill this barrel to the very top with the very best, most aromatic honey... — no, we would not want this honey. The honey in itself is superb, but in it has fallen the poison and stench of a corpse.'

"The American nodded his head in silence. He understood. And you?..." Striking and convincing!

In concluding my letter I in my turn ask Your Eminence: In your conscience as a bishop do you really consider the servants of the KGB, dressed in cassocks and cowls, to be the true spiritual leaders and heads of the much-suffering Russian Church? Do you really not see that at the bottom of that quasi-ecclesiastical Soviet organization, with which you have bound yourselves,† there lies the dead rat of Communism?

Or do you prefer to close your eyes and stop your ears in order not to see and not to hear and to fend off the unsightly reality?

Of course, if this is so, then all further negotiations concerning union are superfluous, and there can be no talk whatever of joint celebration.

February 27/March 12, 1975 *Metropolitan Philaret*

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*A delegation of clergymen, chiefly from the Moscow Patriarchate, sponsored by the National Council of Churches, which visited the United States in February and March of this year, making many "ecumenical" contacts and being officially received by bishops of the American Metropolia. (*Trans. note.*)

†That is, the Moscow Patriarchate, to which the Metropolia bound itself by accepting from it its fictitious "autocephaly," at the cost of proclaiming to the world the "canonicity" and "Orthodoxy" of this organization. (*Trans. note.*)

Saint Dorothy of Kashin

THE FORGOTTEN SAINT OF HOLY RUSSIA*

AWAY FROM THE TUMULT and noise of the world, in quiet monastic refuges, in deserted landscapes which evoke thoughts of eternity, women of Holy Russia worked out their salvation for a thousand years, striving to acquire first of all humility of wisdom. One of them was the forgotten St. Dorothy of 17th-century Kashin.

ST. DOROTHY was born in 1549, in the prosperous early part of the reign of John IV (the Terrible), and died in 1629 during the peaceful reign of the first Romanov Tsar, Michael Theodorovich; but her whole life, beginning when she was twelve years old, passed in the midst of the most frightful conditions of rebellion, anarchy, famine, plague, and foreign invasion.

This holy nun of the latter times was of noble blood, and some say that she was of the family of the Princes Korkodinov, but neither her place of birth nor her name before receiving the monastic tonsure are known to us. She was given in marriage to Theodore Ladygin and by him had a son, Michael; they lived in the region north of Moscow, where the city of Kashin is located. In the first decade of the 17th century, Kashin was laid waste by invading Poles and Lithuanians, and St. Dorothy's husband fell on the field of battle in defence of the city.

Thus it was that, having lost her husband and her earthly happiness in the midst of the terrible misfortunes of the Russian land, St. Dorothy, already a woman of mature years, resolved to abandon the world and seek, in prayers

*Abbreviated from the weekly periodical, *Russian Pilgrim*, 1893, nos. 41, 42, 43, & 50; with additional information from *Russian Ascetics of the 18th & 19th Centuries*, by Bishop Nikodim of Belgorod, vols. 1, 2, & 13, Moscow, 1910.

ST. DOROTHY OF KASHIN

Commemorated September 24 and February 6

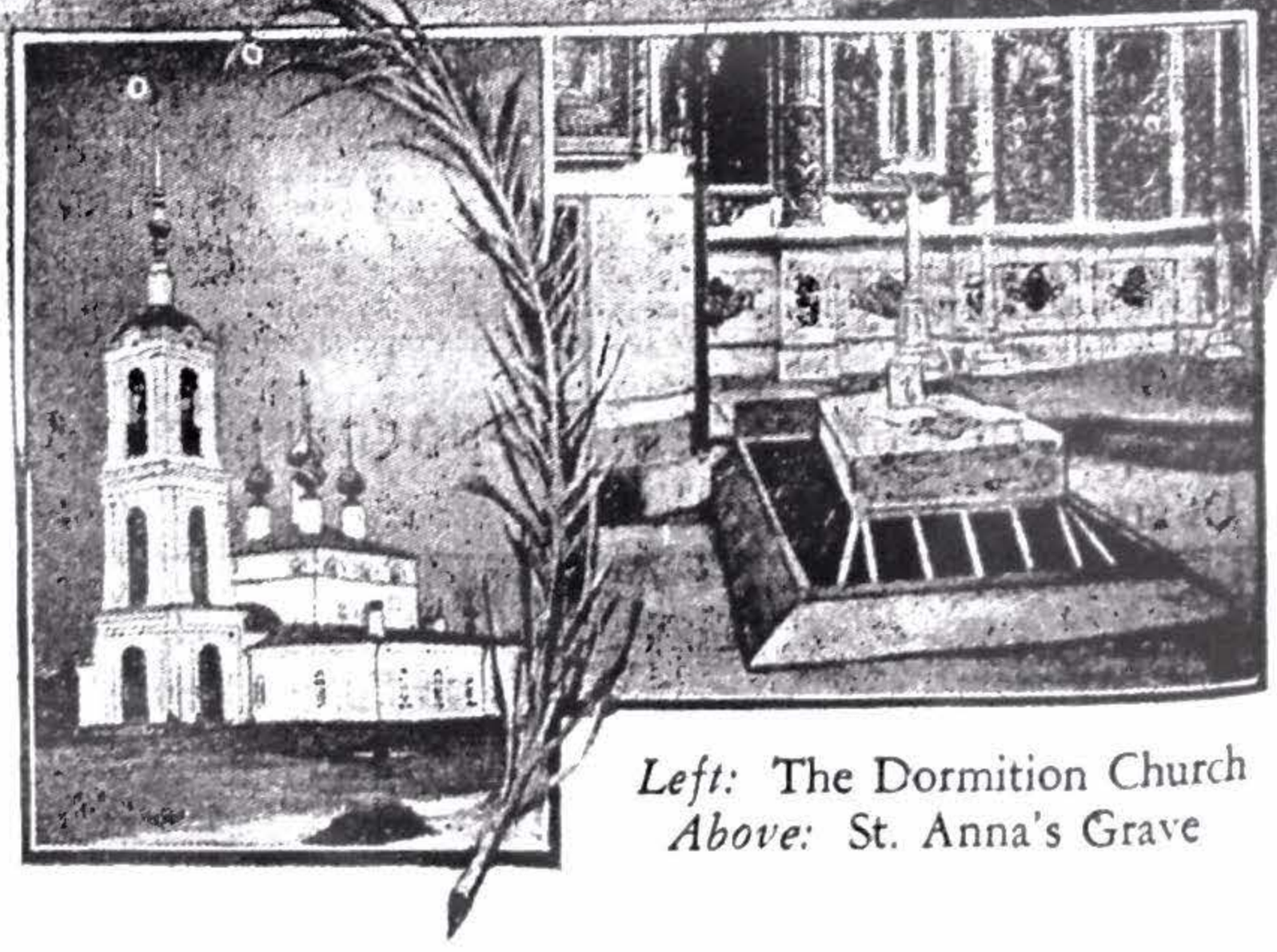
Troparion, Tone 8

In thee, O mother, was truly preserved what is according to the image of God;* for, having taken up thy cross, thou didst follow after Christ,* and thou didst teach in act to despise the flesh, for it passeth away,* but to be diligent over the soul, as a thing immortal.* Wherefore thy spirit, O St. Dorothy, doth rejoice together with the Angels.

Saint Anna of Kashin

Convent of the Meeting of the Lord
Across the River from Kashin, 1913

Abbess Antonia



Left: The Dormition Church
Above: St. Anna's Grave

and struggles, not a temporary happiness which is so often darkened by various evils, but rather a heavenly and eternal blessedness. By Divine inspiration she chose for herself a peaceful and soul-saving refuge in the Convent of the Meeting of the Lord in Kashin. This monastery, renowned for treasuring the holy relics of *St. Anna of Kashin*, the Princess Schema-nun and miracle-worker (†1368, Oct. 2 and June 12), had just been laid waste together with the city, and how many labors and deprivations and struggles stood before her when she entered it! With great effort she made for herself a humble, confining cell in the midst of the ruins, and here she devoted herself to prayer, fasting, obedience, and other holy struggles known to God alone. Here amidst the ashes she found a large Icon of the Korsun Mother of God, which she kept in her cell, and which later became celebrated for working many miracles.

At the same time she strove to help all the many inhabitants of the city and the surrounding area, who lived in great affliction and misfortune. By her word of consolation, by her heartfelt kindness, and by gifts of money, she strove to help everyone and encourage and raise up all those who suffered in this most oppressive time. All the possessions remaining to her after the death of her husband she either spent for the restoration of the convent or distributed to the poor. For herself she kept nothing except prayer, tears, and struggles. Having been accustomed to live amidst wealth and abundance, now she did not even know where to find her daily bread, and she had to endure every kind of deprivation and need. But with God's help she endured everything with greatness of soul and with firm faith in Divine Providence. In her small, one-windowed cell she had a place hidden from the eyes of men, where she wept, prayed, and sighed before the Lord God day and night over her own salvation and that of her fellow men. Especially did she pray for her husband, for the suffering city, and the holy convent. She sought one thing: the most difficult and sorrowful struggles, in order to cleanse her soul of sins and prepare herself for blessed eternity.

The Lord heard the fervent prayer of St. Dorothy for the restoration of the Convent of the Meeting of the Lord. Soon after she had settled in the ruins, they began to resound with the spiritual rejoicing of the sisters, who little by little returned to the convent when the danger had passed. The rumor of the exalted spiritual life of St. Dorothy and her deeds of mercy attracted to the convent also many other virgins and women who were seeking the salvation of their souls. Thus the monastery was re-established, and when enough sisters had gathered together, an abbess was needed for them. But St. Dorothy, who by her numberless labors and struggles and gifts had been responsible for the restoration of the monastery, hated all glory and outward honors, and in her great humility she decisively refused the high position of abbess, preferring to continue her ascetic life in the calling of a simple nun. Thus, for the rest of her life the Saint served for all as an example of love of labor, patience, self-sacrifice, and flaming love for and trust in God. Her whole life exhaled the fragrance of the great women-strugglers of Christian antiquity, and likewise of those who preceded her in her native land: *St. Anna of*

Kashin, St. Euphrosyne, the great foundress of convents and monasteries in Polotsk (†1173, May 25), *St. Febronia of Murom* (†1228, June 25), *St. Euphrosyne* (†1250, Sept. 25), the great virgin-ascetic of Suzdal, daughter of St. Michael of Chernigov, and others.

Such a life did this holy woman live almost in our own days. For it is not the times that are at fault if we do not see now the abundance of holy men and women who flourished in earlier centuries; it is rather our evil will, and lack of determination, and want of faith. But *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever* (Heb. 13:8).

In the year 1615 St. Dorothy received the Great Angelic Schema and redoubled her labors of ascetism and piety. Finally, after twenty years of struggles in the Convent of the Meeting of the Lord, the holy Dorothy came to the end of her much-suffering life, in the eightieth year of her age. On the eve of the feast of the great and holy inspirer of monastic struggles in the Russian North, St. Sergius of Radonezh, on September 24, 1629, St. Dorothy peacefully reposed in the Lord. From that day she has stood before the Lord with the burning lamp of flaming love for God, and with the oil of good deeds done for her neighbor and of the grace of the All-Holy Spirit which she acquired by her holy life. She passed over from death unto the life prepared for all who love God, from an earthly into a heavenly habitation, where she has yet greater boldness of intercession before the Almighty.

The holy remains of St. Dorothy were buried near the main convent church of the Meeting of the Lord, on the north side. Over the grave a memorial of white stone was erected with pillars carved out of it, and the inscription on this memorial survived in almost perfect condition until the 20th century.

St. Dorothy remained in spirit with her monastery even after her repose. Her memory was kept sacredly by the sisters down to our own times. Many have been the miracles of healing and supernatural help worked at her grave for those who have come with faith in her intercession before God. A list of these miracles was kept in the monastery. But her memory became especially revered over two centuries after her repose because of her appearances to Abbess Antonia of the Saint's convent.

Abbess Antonia had been a sister at a convent in Suzdal and had agreed, at the persuasion of her godmother, to transfer to the Kashin Convent of the Meeting. But the 20-year-old novice grieved greatly at leaving her first monastery, where the relics of the pious Princess Sofia (wife of John IV) reposed, supposing that she would be deprived of the grace which she had known there. But then, after tearful prayer at night, she saw in a dream that she was entering the Convent of the Meeting in Kashin, which she had not seen before; but by reason of the great crowds of people she could not enter the monastery. After many efforts she finally entered, and being astonished at the great numbers of pilgrims, she asked the reason for this; she was told that the relics of St. Dorothy (of whom she had never heard) were being opened for her canonization. This vision cut short the grief of the future Abbess Antonia and gave her the assurance that there was a righteous one

reposing in the Convent of the Meeting also, and that her transferal there in 1839 was not without the will of God.

After some years in the Convent, the novice Alexandra (as she was then called) entered a particularly difficult period of spiritual trials. One day in this period, when she had not slept for several nights out of sorrow, she went to the monastery church for Matins, and after sitting down for the reading of the kathismata, she fell into a light sleep. Suddenly an unknown Schema-nun stood before her after coming out of the northern door of the Altar. She held in her right hand a wooden cross and a lighted wax candle, and in her left hand a smoking censer. Her mantle was gathered up and hung over her left arm. She stood right in front of novice Alexandra and directed a penetrating glance at her, as if seeing through her inward grief. Immediately the novice arose, but the vision had already vanished, and no one around her had seen it; and in her heart she felt an indescribably joyful feeling, as if she had never been in a sorrowful state. When she returned to her cell after Matins, she hastened to sketch with a pencil on paper the Schema-nun she had seen, whom she recognized as St. Dorothy, whom she deeply revered and often called upon in prayer. Several years after this she painted the Icon of St. Dorothy in full stature, exactly as she had sketched it that morning (see page 7).

Later Mother Antonia became Abbess in the Convent of St. Dorothy, and out of her reverence for the Saint she desired to show some special veneration for her memory. Many times, when visiting her holy Elder, Father Peter the fool for Christ's sake of Uglich, she would hear from him these words of reproach: "Dorothy is not honored among you!" This greatly grieved Mother Antonia, and finally she asked the Elder what she should do to venerate the holy one. He replied sharply and decisively: "Build a chapel!" In obedience to her holy Elder, she had a small chapel erected out of sheets of metal in a single morning in the summer of 1857, fearing that someone might tell the local bishop and he might forbid the construction if it were long underway. The bishop, however, when he found out about it, approved this veneration of St. Dorothy, and in 1870 Abbess Antonia was able to build a larger, stone chapel over the Saint's relics.

During these years St. Dorothy appeared many times and worked many miracles in her convent. A certain nun, Mother Seraphima, loved to spend the midnight hours with her cell attendant in the convent church. One night they came to the church at midnight and to their amazement saw a strange nun praying by a window, even though the church had been locked and no one could have entered. Another time at midnight they saw in the church an extraordinary light, all the candles were burning, and a nun was praying before the Altar. Many other sisters also were vouchsafed such visions of St. Dorothy.

We do not know the fate of the Convent or of the veneration of St. Dorothy after the Communist Revolution. But among those who love God's Saints she will not be forgotten, and in heaven she continues to pray for the newly-devastated Russian land and for all who venerate her with faith and love.

The TYPICON of the Orthodox Church's Divine Services

CHAPTER SIX
ORTHODOX FEAST-DAY HYMNODY:
I. *BLESSED IS THE MAN*

AT THE VESPERS of Saturday begins the weekly cycle of the reading of the Psalter with the first kathisma (Psalms 1 through 8). Although the choice of kathismata for each day of the week, even on great feasts, is always constant and so does not correspond to the sacred remembrances of the day, — nevertheless, there could scarcely be any other part of the Psalter more fitting for the Vespers of Saturday (which is actually the beginning of the Sunday services) than the first kathisma, and the first part of it even replaces a part of the reading of the Psalter on feast days. Probably those who originally collected the Psalms into a whole placed first the most poetical psalms. Practically all the psalms of this kathisma, also, have a Messianic interpretation, indicating the sufferings of the Saviour in the image of the persecuted David. Several of these psalms, by reason of the exaltedness of their teaching, have been placed by the Church at the beginning of various Divine services: the third psalm is the first of the Six Psalms of Matins; the fourth psalm is the first of Great Compline; the fifth psalm is the first of the First Hour.

Especially appropriate for the Saturday Vespers are the first three psalms, the "first antiphon" (or first stasis) of the first kathisma. "The three first psalms of the Psalter," writes St. Simeon of Thessalonica in his commentary on the Divine services, "refer primarily to the Lord: for the Word of God Who became man was in truth the only Blessed Man..." Fr. Euthymius Zigabenus, the renowned 12th-century commentator on the Psalms, writes in particular of these three psalms: "In the first psalm the Prophet, before anything else, strives to incline us away from impiety and sins" (*Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of the pestilent*); "then in the second psalm he strives to show us what our inheritance is and to Whom we should cling" (*Serve ye the Lord with fear, and rejoice unto Him with trembling; blessed are all they that put their trust in Him*); "and further, in the third psalm, he prophesies concerning the punishments and evil attacks of the enemy against those who cling to God" (*O Lord, why are they multiplied that afflict me? Many rise up against me; arise, O Lord, save me, O my God*); "and after this he instructs us how we must heal the passions and how we may be delivered from the attacks of the enemy" (*Commentary on the Psalter*, Foreword, ch. 7). And St. Basil the Great, in his commentary on the first psalm (Homily 10), emphasizes its value as an *inspiration* to the Christian struggler to begin the path of virtue: "When David intended to propose in the course of his speech to the combatants of true religion many painful tasks involving immeasurable sweats and toils, he showed first the happy end, that in the hope of the blessings reserved for us we might endure without grief the sufferings of this life."

It is not surprising, then, that for such a kathisma, and especially for its first antiphon, the Church has assigned an especially solemn execution. The Typicon is silent concerning the mode of singing all the other kathismata (which, indeed, are almost always read and not sung), indicating this only for the first, and also for the 17th, kathismata. Of the first kathisma the Typicon says (ch. 2): "Likewise we chant the first antiphon of the first kathisma, *Blessed is the Man*, in the 8th tone; the second and third antiphons [Psalms 4-8] we sing in the Tone of the day." Thus, the first antiphon is sung to a special variation of the 8th Tone, the same triumphant Tone in which the Prefatory Psalm (Ps. 103) of Great Vespers is sung (as will be described in a later chapter). Further, the first antiphon is sung with the refrain *Alleluia* ("Praise ye the Lord," which was sung in the Old Testament only on Pascha and other great feasts), a refrain which is otherwise sung almost only with the two psalms of the Polyeleos. The addition of *Alleluia* (three times in the chant given below) to each verse of these psalms is not prescribed by the Typicon, but is based on the ancient musical tradition of the Church which has come down to our days.

The three parts of the first kathisma are called "antiphons": that is to say, they are sung "antiphonically," which means only that two choirs alternate in singing the verses. Thus the first choir (on the right *cliros* or choir-place) will begin: *Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia,* and the second choir will respond: *Nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of the pestilent. Alleluia* (3). And thus the singing will continue to the end of the third psalm, whereupon one choir will sing: *Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Alleluia* (3), and the other will reply: *Both now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen. Alleluia* (3). Then the first choir sings the standard conclusion to any stasis of the Psalter: *Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Glory to Thee, O God*; the second choir repeats the same phrase; and the first choir sings it a third time.

This antiphonal mode of singing, which according to tradition was introduced into the Church by St. Ignatius the God-bearer of Antioch in the 1st century in accordance with an Angelic revelation, is that employed for almost all of the sacred chant of the Orthodox Church, and it by no means requires a "trained choir" to execute it. If there are two people present who know well the melody of a particular psalm, they can as easily sing it antiphonically as not, and the variety thus produced greatly inspires the interest and attention of others who are present, in addition to giving rest to the voices of the singers.

It is to be regretted that in the present practice of the Russian Church, outside of monasteries the first three psalms are seldom sung in their entirety, and a person who has not studied the structure of the services might be inclined to believe that *Blessed is the Man* is composed only of the six or so verses of these psalms which are generally sung in parish churches. Archbishop John Maximovitch had the custom, on week days when there were only one or two persons on the *cliros*, to have these psalms read in their entirety, with two verses from each psalm being sung; this alternation of reading and singing also arouses interest and attention. But most satisfactory of all, especially if it is possible to have two choirs, is to sing the whole first antiphon.

The first antiphon, with its solemn and festive character, is sung not only at Saturday Vespers for the feast of the Resurrection on Sunday, but also at almost all other great feasts (of Polyeleos or Vigil rank), where it entirely replaces the usual Vespers reading of the Psalter. At a Polyeleos service *Blessed is the Man* is the first chant to be heard that distinguishes the major feast from the services of an "ordinary" day.

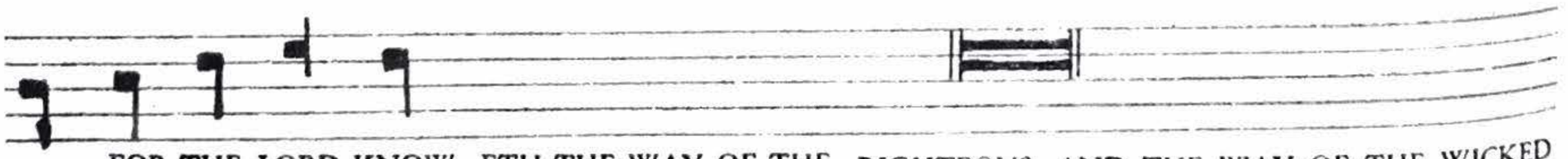
On great feasts that occur not on a Sunday, only the first antiphon of the first kathisma is sung; but at Saturday Vespers the next two antiphons are likewise appointed to be sung "in the Tone of the day" — that is, the Tone of the Octoechos. In monasteries these are usually read; in parishes, they are usually omitted.

The melody indicated by the notes that follow is from Slavonic "Ordinary Chant," a more recent simplification of ancient chant. The melody is a recognizable variation of the 8th Tone. Other more complicated melodies have also come down to us (for example, "Kievan," "Greek," and "Valaam" Chant); but the simple melody given here is at the same time so inspiring and exalted that it will not weary the lover of the splendor of the Orthodox Church's Divine services — even if he should sing it throughout the year at very many great feasts. The notes are given only for the six most commonly used verses, two from each psalm; but all the rest of the verses may easily be sung to the same melody. Let the zealot of feast-day hymnody labor a little in order to sing the psalms in full as the Holy Fathers intended, and he will soon discover that his soul is surprisingly enriched and exalted as it begins to enter into the spirit of the Orthodox Divine services.

BLESSED IS THE MAN

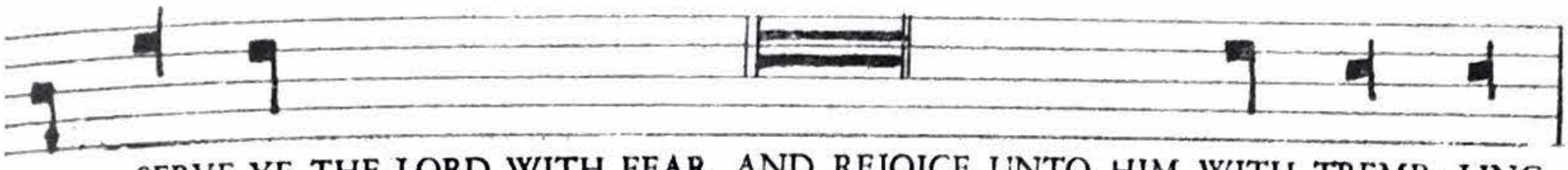
ORDINARY CHANT

From Psalm 1:

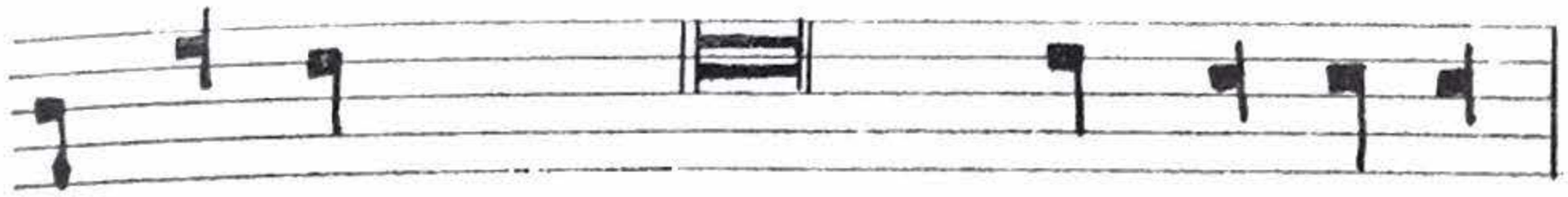


SHALL PER - ISH. REFRAIN: ALLELUIA (3)

From Psalm II:



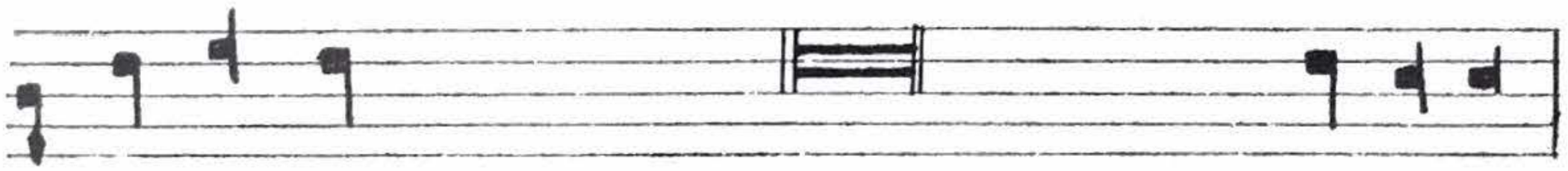
SERVE YE THE LORD WITH FEAR AND REJOICE UNTO HIM WITH TREMB - LING. ALLELUIA.



BLES - SED ARE ALL THEY THAT PUT THEIR TRUST IN HIM. ALLELUIA.

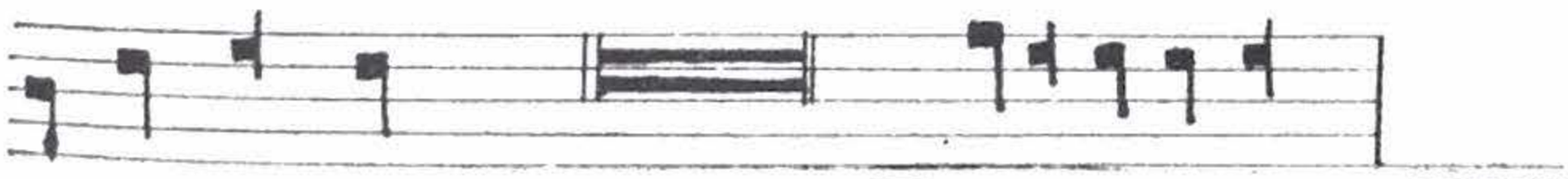
From Psalm III:

A - RISE, O LORD, SAVE ME, O MY GOD. ALLELUIA.

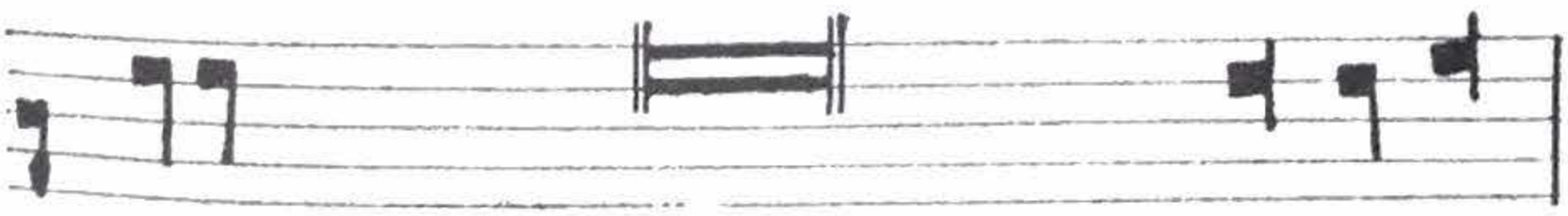


SAL - VA - TION IS OF THE LORD, AND THY BLESSING IS UPON THY PEOPLE. ALLELUIA.

GLO - RY TO THE FATHER AND TO THE SON AND TO THE HOLY SPIRIT. ALLELUIA.



BOTH NOW AND EVER AND TO THE AGES OF AGES. A - MEN. ALLELUIA.



ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA. GLORY TO THEE, O GOD (TWICE).

ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA, AL - LE - LU - IA, GLO - RY TO THEE, O GOD

Next Issue: Orthodox Feast-day Hymnody. II. The Polyeleos.

Orthodoxy and the

Three Excerpts from the New Book
OF THE ST. HERMAN OF ALASKA BROTHERHOOD

Preface

EVERY HERESY has its own "spirituality," its own characteristic approach to the practical religious life. Thus, Roman Catholicism, until recently, had a clearly distinguishable piety of its own, bound up with the rosary, the "Sacred Heart," the "Blessed Sacrament," and the like; and a careful Orthodox observer could detect in such aspects of modern Latin "spirituality" the practical results of the theological errors of Rome. Fundamentalist Protestantism, too, has its own approach to prayer, its typical hymns, its approach to spiritual "revival"; and in all of these can be detected the application to religious life of its fundamental errors in Christian doctrine. The present book is about the "spirituality" of Ecumenism, the chief heresy of the 20th century.

Until recently it appeared that Ecumenism was such an artificial construct, such a syncretic conglomeration of heresies, that it had no spirituality of its own; the "liturgical" agenda of Ecumenical gatherings both great and small appeared to be no more than an elaborate Protestant Sunday service.

But the very nature of the Ecumenist heresy — the belief that there is no one visible Church of Christ, that it is only now being formed — is such that it disposes the soul under its influence to certain spiritual attitudes which, in time, should produce a typical Ecumenist "piety" and "spirituality." In our day this seems to be happening at last, as the Ecumenical attitude of religious "expectancy" and "searching" begins to be rewarded by the activity of a certain "spirit" which gives religious satisfaction to the barren souls of the Ecumenist wasteland and results in a characteristic "piety" which is no longer merely Protestant in tone.

This book was begun in 1971 with an examination of the latest "Ecumenical" fashion — the opening of a "dialogue with non-Christian religions." Four chapters on this subject were printed in *The Orthodox Word* in 1971 and 1972, reporting chiefly on the events of the late 1960's up to early 1972. The last of these chapters was a detailed discussion of the "charismatic revival" which had just then been taken up by several "Orthodox" priests in America, and this movement was described as a form of "Ecumenical spirituality" inclu-

sive of religious experiences which are distinctly non-Christian in nature.

Especially this last chapter aroused a great deal of interest among Orthodox people, and it helped to persuade some not to take part in the "charismatic" movement. Others, who had already participated in "charismatic" meetings, left the movement and confirmed many of the conclusions of this article about it. Since then the "charismatic revival" in "Orthodox" parishes in America, judging from Fr. Eusebius Stephanou's periodical *The Logos,* has entirely adopted the language and techniques of Protestant revivalism, and its un-Orthodox character has become clear to any serious observer. Despite the Protestant mentality of its promoters, however, the "charismatic revival" as a "spiritual" movement is definitely something more than Protestantism. The characterization of it in this article as a kind of *"Christian" mediumism,* which has been corroborated by a number of observers of it, links it to the new "Ecumenical spirituality" out of which is being born a new, non-Christian religion.

In the summer of 1974, one of the American monasteries of the Russian Church Outside of Russia was visited by a young man who had been directed to one of its monks by the "spirit" who constantly attended him. During his brief visit the story of this young man unfolded itself. He was from a conservative Protestant background which he found spiritually barren, and he had been opened up to "spiritual" experiences by his Pentecostalist grandmother: the moment he touched a Bible she had given him, he received "spiritual gifts" — most notably, he was attended by an invisible "spirit" who gave him precise instructions as to where to walk and drive; and he was able at will to hypnotize others and cause them to levitate (a talent which he playfully used to terrorize atheist acquaintances). Occasionally he would doubt that his "gifts" were from God, but these doubts were overcome when he reflected on the fact that his spiritual "barrenness" had vanished, that his "spiritual rebirth" had been brought about by contact *with the Bible,* and that he seemed to be leading a very rich life of prayer and "spirituality." Upon becoming acquainted with Orthodoxy at this monastery, and especially after reading the article on the "charismatic revival," he admitted that here he found the first thorough and clear explanation of his "spiritual" experiences; most likely, he confessed, his "spirit" was an evil one. This realization, however, did not seem to touch his heart, and he left without being converted to Orthodoxy.

How many such "barren Christians" there are in the world today! The "charismatic revival" seems to have been devised just for them. Others, however, are less attached to "Christianity," and their spiritual unrest leads them to Eastern religions. For this reason a fifth chapter has been added to this book, describing three kinds of "Christian meditation" which also produce "spiritual" results which are very impressive to those who come from the lukewarmness of modern "Christianity."

Shortly after the publication of the article on the "charismatic revival," *The Orthodox Word* received a letter from a respected Russian Orthodox ecclesiastical writer who is well versed in Orthodox theological and spiritual literature, saying: "What you have described here is the religion of the future, the religion of Antichrist." More and more, as this and similar forms of counterfeit spirituality take hold even of nominal Orthodox Christians, one shudders to behold the deception into which spiritually unprepared Christians can fall. This book is a warning to them and to all trying to live a conscious Orthodox Christian life in a world possessed by unclean spirits. It is not an exhaustive treatment of this religion, which has not yet attained its final form, but rather a preliminary exploration of those spiritual tendencies which, it would indeed seem, are preparing the way for a true religion of anti-Christianity, a religion outwardly "Christian," but centered upon a pagan "initiation" experience.

May this description of the increasingly evident and brazen activity of satan, the prince of darkness, among "Christians," inspire True Orthodox Christians with the fear of losing God's grace and turn them back to the pure sources of Christian life: the spiritual doctrine of the Holy Fathers of Orthodoxy!

Eastern Meditation Invades Christianity

IN ADDITION to the theological "dialogue" with non-Christian religions and the thinly-disguised Eastern religious experiences described in previous chapters, there have been in recent years quite open attempts to develop a syncretism of Christianity with several Eastern religions, particularly in the realm of "spiritual practices." Such attempts more often than not cite the *Philocalia* and the Eastern Orthodox tradition of contemplative prayer as being more kin to Eastern spiritual practices than anything that exists in the West. In a word, Holy Orthodoxy is being actively exploited in a kind of "dialogue of experience" with the Hindu Yogis and

Zen Masters. Let us look briefly at the chief attempts that have been made in this direction, and then see why the religious philosophy which underlies them all is false and dangerous.

1. CHRISTIAN YOGA

HINDU YOGA has been known in the West for many decades, and especially in America it has given rise to innumerable cults and also to a popular form of physical therapy which is supposedly non-religious in its aims. Nearly twenty years ago a French Benedictine monk wrote of his experiences in making Yoga a "Christian" discipline; the description that follows is taken from his book.*

Hindu Yoga is a discipline that presupposes a rather abstemious, disciplined life, and is composed of breath control and certain physical postures which produce a state of relaxation in which one meditates, usually with the help of a mantra or sacred utterance which aids concentration. The essence of Yoga is not the discipline itself, but the meditation which is its end. The author is correct when he writes: "The aims of Hindu Yoga are spiritual. It is tantamount to treason to forget this and retain only the purely physical side of this ancient discipline, to see in it no more than a means towards bodily health or beauty" (p. 54). To this it should be added that the person who uses Yoga only for physical well-being is already disposing himself towards certain spiritual attitudes and even experiences of which he is undoubtedly unaware; of this more will be said below.

The same author then continues: "The art of the yogi is to establish himself in a complete silence, to empty himself of all thoughts and illusions, to discard and forget everything but this one idea: man's true self is divine; it is God, and the rest is silence" (p. 63).

This idea, of course, is not Christian but pagan, and the aim of "Christian Yoga" is to use the technique of Yoga for a different spiritual end, for a "Christian" meditation. The object of the Yoga technique, in this view, is to make one relaxed, content, unthinking, and passive or receptive to spiritual ideas and experiences. "As soon as you have taken up the posture, you will feel your body relaxing and a feeling of general well-being will establish itself in you" (p. 158). The exercises produce an "extraordinary sense of calm" (p. 6). "To begin with, one gets the feeling of a general unwinding, of a well-being taking hold, of a euphoria that will, and in fact does, last. If one's nerves have been tense and overstrung, the exercises calm them, and fatigue disappears in a little time" (p. 49). "The goal of all his [the yogi's] efforts is to silence the thinking self in him by shutting his eyes to every kind

*J.-M. Dechanet, *Christian Yoga*, Harper & Row, NY, 1972; first English translation, 1960.

of enticement" (p. 55). The euphoria which Yoga brings "could well be called a 'state of health' that allows us to do more and do it better on the human plane to begin with, and on the Christian religious, spiritual plane afterwards. The most apt word to describe it is contentedness, a contentedness that inhabits body and soul and predisposes us ... toward the spiritual life" (p. 31). One's whole personality can be changed by it: "Hatha Yoga influences character to the good. One man, after some weeks of practice, admits he no longer knows himself, and everyone notices a change in his bearing and reaction. He is gentler and more understanding. He faces experience calmly. He is content... His whole personality has been altered and he himself feels it steadying and opening out; from this there arises an almost permanent condition of euphoria, of 'contentedness.'" (p. 50).

But all of this is only a preparation for a "spiritual" aim, which begins to make itself felt in a very short time: "By becoming contemplative in a matter of weeks, my prayer had been given a particular and novel cast" (p. 7). Becoming extraordinarily calm, the author notices "the ease I felt in entering into prayer, in concentrating on a subject" (p.6). One becomes "more receptive to impulses and promptings from heaven" (p. 13). The practice of Yoga makes for increased suppleness and receptivity, and thus for openness to those personal exchanges between God and the soul that mark the way of the mystical life" (p. 31). Even for the "apprentice yogi" prayer becomes "sweet" and "embraces the whole of man" (p. 183). One is relaxed and "ready to tremble at the touch of the Holy Ghost, to receive and welcome what God in his Goodness thinks fit to let us experience" (p. 71). "We shall be making our being ready to be taken, to be seized — and this is surely one of the forms, in fact the highest of Christian contemplation" (p. 72). "Every day the exercises, and indeed the whole ascetic discipline of my Yoga, make it easier for the grace of Christ to flow in me. I feel my hunger for God growing, and my thirst for righteousness, and my desire to be a Christian in the full strength of the word" (p. 11).

Anyone who has read the account of "spiritual deception" in earlier pages of this book (pp. 56-68) will immediately recognize in this description of "Christian Yoga" precisely the same characteristics that mark the illusions of the followers of the "charismatic" movement: the same striving for "holy and divine feelings," the same openness and willingness to be "seized" by a spirit, the same seeking not for God but for "spiritual consolations," the same self-intoxication which is mistaken for a "state of grace," the same incredible ease with which one becomes "contemplative" or "mystical," the same "mystical revelations" and pseudo-spiritual states. These are the common character-

istics of all who are in this particular state of spiritual deception. But the author of *Christian Yoga,* being a Benedictine monk, adds some particular "meditations" which reveal him as fully in the spirit of the Roman Catholic "meditation" of recent centuries, with its free play of fantasies on Christian themes. Thus, for example, having meditated on a theme of the Christmas Eve mass, he begins to *see* the Child in the arms of His Mother: "I gaze; nothing more. Pictures, ideas (associations of ideas: Saviour-King-Light-Halo-Shepherd-Child-Light again) come one after the other, march past.... All these pieces of a sacred puzzle taken together arouse one idea in me... a silent vision of the whole mystery of Christmas" (pp. 161-2). Anyone with the slightest knowledge of Orthodox spiritual discipline will see that this pitiable "Christian yogi" has fallen handily into a trap set by one of the lesser demons that lie in wait for the seeker of "spiritual experiences": he has not even seen an "angel of light," but has only given way to his own "religious fancies," the product of a heart and mind totally unprepared for spiritual warfare and the deceptions of the demons. Such "meditation" is being practiced today in a number of Roman Catholic convents and monasteries.

The fact that the book concludes with an article by the French translator of the *Philocalia,* together with excerpts from the *Philocalia,* only reveals the abyss that separates these dilettantes from the true spirituality of Orthodoxy, which is totally inaccessible to the modern "wise men" who no longer understand its language. A sufficient indication of the author's incompetence in understanding the *Philocalia* is the fact that he gives the name "prayer of the heart" (which in Orthodox tradition is the highest mental prayer, acquired by very few only after many years of ascetic struggle and being humbled by a true God-bearing Elder) to the easy trick of reciting syllables in rhythm with the heartbeat (p. 196).

We shall comment more fully below on the dangers of this "Christian Yoga" when noting what it possesses in common with other forms of "Eastern meditation" which are being offered to Christians today.

2. CHRISTIAN ZEN

AN EASTERN religious practice on a more popular level is offered in the book of an Irish Catholic priest: William Johnston, *Christian Zen.** The author starts from basically the same place as the author of *Christian Yoga*: a feeling of dissatisfaction with Western Christianity, a desire to give it a dimension of contemplation or meditation. "Many people, discontented with old forms of prayer, discontented with the old devotions that once served so

* Harper & Row, New York, 1971.

well, are looking for something that will satisfy the aspirations of the modern heart" (p. 9). "Contact with Zen... has opened up new vistas, teaching me that there are possibilities in Christianity I never dreamed of." One may "practice Zen as a way of deepening and broadening his Christian faith" (p. 2).

The technique of Japanese Zen is very similar to that of Indian Yoga — from which it is ultimately derived — although it is rather simpler. There is the same basic posture (but not the variety of postures of Yoga), breathing technique, the repetition of a sacred name if desired, as well as other techniques peculiar to Zen. The aim of these techniques is the same as that of Yoga: to abolish rational thinking and attain a state of calm, silent meditation. The sitting position "impedes discursive reasoning and thinking" and enables one to go "down to the center of one's being in imageless and silent contemplation," (p. 5) to "a deep and beautiful realm of psychic life" (p. 17), to "deep interior silence" (p. 16). The experience thus attained is somewhat similar to that achieved by taking drugs, for "people who have used drugs understand a little about Zen, since they have been awakened to the realization that there is a depth in the mind worth exploring" (p. 35). And yet this experience opens up "a new approach to Christ, an approach that is less dualistic and more Oriental" (p. 48). Even absolute beginners in Zen can attain "a sense of union and an atmosphere of supernatural presence" (p. 31), a savoring of "mystical silence" (p. 30); through Zen, the state of contemplation hitherto restricted to a few "mystics" can be "broadened out," and "all may have vision, all may reach *samadhi*" (enlightenment) (p. 46).

The author of *Christian Zen* speaks of the renewal of Christianity; but he admits that the experience he thinks can bring it about may be had by anyone, Christian or non-Christian. "I believe that there is a basic enlightenment which is neither Christian nor Buddhist nor anything else. It is just human" (p. 97). Indeed, at a convention on meditation at a Zen temple near Kyoto "the surprising thing about the meeting was lack of any common faith. No one seemed the slightest bit interested in what anyone else believed or disbelieved, and no one, as far as I recall, even mentioned the name of God" (p. 69). This agnostic character of meditation has a great advantage for "missionary" purposes, for "in this way meditation can be taught to people who have little faith — to those who are troubled in conscience or fear that God is dead. Such people can always sit and breathe. For them meditation becomes a search, and I have found... that people who begin to search in this way eventually find God. Not the anthropomorphic God they have rejected, but the great being in whom we live, move, and are" (p. 70).

(continued on p. 27)

Field Flowers

or Lilies of the Field

Gathered from the Divine Scripture, Concerning God's Commandments and the Holy Virtues

BY BLESSED PAISIUS VELICHKOVSKY

Introduction

BY ELDER THEODOSIUS OF KAROULIA, MOUNT ATHOS, 1905

In the library of the Russian Skete of the Prophet Elias on Mount Athos there is a manuscript written in semi-Slavonic speech similar to the Lives of Saints by St. Demetrius of Rostov. Concerning this manuscript there has been preserved the following oral tradition. In the 20's of the nineteenth century a young novice of one of the Russian monasteries who was a peasant of Orel province, went to the Niamets monastery in Moldavia, which was at that time renowned for the high spiritual life of the monks and for the ascetic works of the earlier abbot, the famous Elder Paisius Velichkovsky, from Little Russia, who died in 1794. Receiving the monastic tonsure in this new place of dwelling with the name of Sophronius, this monk for a long time remained in this monastery, in which he found many disciples of the great Elder Paisius, among them the calligrapher Platon who had written down the works of the Elder Paisius during his own lifetime. The calligrapher Platon, being well disposed towards the monk Sophronius for his skilled singing on the cliros, gave him the above-mentioned manuscript which he had written out with his own hand, remarking that the forty-four ascetic homilies in the first half of this manuscript were composed by their renowned Elder Paisius himself.

In 1836, having left the Niamets Monastery in Moldavia, Monk Sophronius came to live in the Skete of the Prophet Elias on Mount Athos, which had been founded by Elder Paisius Velichkovsky while he was living on the Holy Mountain. In this skete the monk Sophronius died in 1867, in the 72nd year of his life, leaving in this monastery the manuscrript he had brought, concerning which he related the above account to many of the brethren of the Skete, including a certain educated monk who had come to the monastery in his youth in 1864, and until now remains among the living, being respected for his years. From his words this information is taken concerning the manuscript now being published. In the content of its ideas, which are penetrated with a strict Patristic ascetic spirit, and by the character of the composition, which is distinguished by simplicity and the highest degree of persuasiveness, the manuscript very much reminds us of the works of the Elder Paisius which

have already been printed. He was a zealot in word and deed of the inward spiritual monastic life. And this similarity serves as a confirmation of the authenticity of the oral communications regarding the authorship of this work which have been set forth above.

At first we supposed about this manuscript that it, in particular the first half of it, was not an independent work of the great Elder but a translation of some Greek printed or manuscript book. But after an investigation in the libraries of the famous Athonite monasteries by men who are highly educated and deserving of faith, no such printed book or manuscript was to be found; nor was it in the catalogues of printed books in the Greek language. Therefore the first half of this manuscript, comprising forty-four homilies, must be acknowledged as an independent work of the Elder Paisius, which is now being published in Russian translation by the Skete of the Prophet Elias for the benefit of all monastics, especially those who are zealous for the solitary contemplative life; while certain homilies in it are most useful for lay people also.*

Chapter One

A BRIEF EXPOSITION OF THOUGHTS WHICH DISPOSE TO REPENTANCE

REMEMBER, O MY SOUL, the terrible and frightful wonder: that your Creator for your sake became Man, and deigned to suffer for the sake of your salvation. His Angels tremble, the Cherubim are terrified, the Seraphim are in fear, and all the heavenly powers ceaselessly give praise; and you, unfortunate soul, remain in laziness. At least from this time forth arise and do not put off, my beloved soul, holy repentance, contrition of heart and penance for your sins. Putting them off year after year, month after month, day after day, you will not at all desire with your whole heart to repent, and you will not

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* *Translators' note.* The second half of the manuscript referred to here, which was not translated into Russian (nor will be translated here into English), is a compilation of citations from the Holy Fathers, undoubtedly made by Elder Paisius himself. The first chapter of this compilation is placed in the Russian and in this English translation as Chapter One of the *Field Flowers,* replacing the first Chapter of Elder Paisius, which for some reason was missing from the manuscript. Thus there are 45 chapters in the whole work.

The printed edition of this work (Odessa, 1905) does not indicate the author of the above Introduction. However, from the disciples of Elder Theodosius, who reposed in 1937, it has been learned that it was he who, at the request of the Fathers of the Skete of St. Elias, verified the evidence which indicates the authorship of Blessed Paisius and wrote this Introduction. The work is printed here for the first time as a part of the collected works of Elder Paisius.

find one to have compassion on you. O! with what torture you will then begin to repent, but without success. Having the opportunity today to do some good deed, do not put off until tomorrow, my beloved soul, holy repentance, because you do not know what today will bring forth or what misfortune might happen to you this night. For you do not know what the day or night will bring, whether a long life stands before you or not, or if you will suddenly and unexpectedly receive a miserable and speedy death. Now, my beloved soul, is the time of patience; now is the time to endure sorrow; now is the time to keep the commandments and fulfill the virtues; now is the time of sweet lamentation and tearful mourning. If you truly wish to be saved, my soul, be in love with sorrow and groaning, as previously you loved repose. Live as if you were daily dying; soon your life will pass by like the shadow of clouds before the sun, and you will be forgotten. The days of our life, as it were, are shed forth into the air; and so, do not hesitate even before the most difficult sorrow.

With regard to men: let us not speak of senseless sorrow, but even in reasonable sorrow, do not give yourself over to grief, do not be disturbed, do not run away; but consider yourself as dust before the feet of others. Without this you cannot be saved or escape eternal torment; for our life ends soon, and passes away as a single day. If a man will not crush himself piously through virtues, or will not sacrifice his own life for the fulfilling of God's commandments and the traditions of the Fathers, he cannot be saved.

And thus, my beloved soul, remember all the Saints: the Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, Hierarchs, Holy Monks and Righteous ones, Fools-for-Christ and all who from the ages have pleased God. Where have you found Saints who did not subdue the flesh to the spirit or who did not suffer in difficult misfortunes and cruel sorrows? But daily they received a multitude of misfortunes, likewise suffered hunger and thirst, kept vigil and prayed day and night, had humility and contrition of heart, a childlike lack of malice, every mercy, an aid in every sorrow and need, various gifts and alms-giving, as much as possible. In a word, they had all the virtues, together with an unhypocritical love. What they themselves did not wish and hated they did not do to others. And they did it with obedience, like bought slaves, working not as for a man, but as for God, with wise simplicity, but not appearing wise, as being insignificant, but only paying heed to their own salvation.

O man! death stands before you. If you will labor, you will be revered with eternal life in the future age. Virtue is acquired by every kind of forcing oneself. Therefore, if you wish to conquer the passions, cut off the love of pleasure; but if you are pursuing food, you will spend a life in passions; the

soul will not be humbled if the flesh is not deprived of bread. It is not possible to deliver the soul from perdition while protecting the body from unpleasantness. Therefore let us return to what is primary. If you wish to be saved, O my soul, to go first on the most sorrowful path which has been indicated here, to enter into the Heavenly Kingdom and receive eternal life — then refine your flesh, taste voluntary bitterness, and endure difficult sorrows, as all the Saints tasted and endured. And when a man is preparing himself and gives himself the command to endure for the sake of God all sorrows which come upon him, then light and painless seem for him all sorrows, unpleasantnesses and attacks of devils and men. He does not fear death, and nothing can separate such a one from the love of Christ.

Have you heard, my beloved soul, how the Holy Fathers spent their lives? O my soul! Imitate them at least a little. Did they not have tears? O woe, my soul. Were they not sorrowful, thin and worn out in body? O woe, my soul. Did they not have bodily illnesses, great wounds and lamentation of soul with tears? O woe, my soul. Were they not clothed in the same infirm body that we have? O woe, my soul! Did they not have the desire for splendid, sweet and light repose in this world and every bodily repose? Yes, they desired these things, and their bodies in truth were afflicted, but they exchanged their desires for patience and their grief for future joy. They cut off everything once and for all. They considered themselves as dead men, and tormented themselves mercilessly in spiritual labors. Do you see, my soul, how the Holy Fathers labored, having no repose and suffering every kind of evil? They subjected the flesh to the spirit and fulfilled all the other commandments of God, and were saved.

But you, O pitiful soul, do not at all wish to force yourself, and you grow faint from small labors, grow despondent and do not at all remember the hour of death and weep over your sins; but you have become accustomed, my wretched soul, to eat to the fill, to drink to the fill and to be slothful. Do you not know that you are called voluntarily to torment? And yet you endure nothing. How then do you wish to be saved?

At least from this time forth, then: Arise, my beloved soul, and do what I shall tell you. If you cannot labor as the Holy Fathers did, then at least begin according to your strength. Serve everyone with humility and simplicity of heart; acknowledging your infirmity and belittling yourself, say: "Woe to thee, my wretched soul; woe to thee, vile one; woe to thee, O all-defiled one, slothful, careless, sleepy, cruel; woe to thee, who hast perished!" And so, little by little it will come to tender-feeling, will shed tears, will come to itself and repent.

ORTHODOXY AND THE RELIGION OF THE FUTURE

(continued from p. 22)

The author's description of the Zen "enlightenment" experience would seem to make it very kin to the "charismatic" experience that has been described in the preceding chapter: "I myself believe that within us are locked up torrents and torrents of joy that can be released by meditation — sometimes they will burst through with incredible force, flooding the personality with an extraordinary happiness that comes from one knows not where" (p. 88). Indeed, after returning to America after twenty years in Japan, the author was astonished to find that the Pentecostal experience is so close to the Zen experience, and he himself received the "Baptism of the Spirit" at a "charismatic" meeting (p. 100). The author concluded: "Returning to the Pentecostal meeting, it seems to me that the imposition of hands, the prayers of the people, the charity of the community — these can be forces that release the psychic power that brings enlightenment to the person who has been consistently practicing *zazen*" (p. 101). He speculates that "a Christian Zen needs something like the charismatic renewal for its completion; and similarly, the charismatic renewal may well benefit from the silence of *zazen*" (pp. 92-93).

Little need be said in criticism of these views; they are basically the same as those of the author of *Christian Yoga*, only less esoteric asd more popular. Anyone who believes that the agnostic, pagan experience of Zen can be used for a "contemplative renewal within Christianity" (p. 4) surely knows nothing whatever of the great contemplative tradition of Orthodoxy, which presupposes burning faith, true belief, and intense ascetic struggle; and yet the same author does not hesitate to drag the *Philocalia* and the "great Orthodox schools" into his narrative, stating that they also lead to the condition of "contemplative silence and peace" and are an example of "Zen within the Christian tradition" (p. 39); and he advocates the use of the Prayer of Jesus during Zen meditation for those who wish this (p. 28). Such ignorance is positively dangerous, especially when the possessor of it invites the students at his lectures, as an experiment in "mysticism," to "sit in *zazen* for forty minutes each evening" (p. 30). How many sincere, misguided false prophets there are in the world today, each thinking he is bringing benefit to his fellow men, instead of an invitation to psychic and spiritual disaster! Of this we shall speak more in the conclusion below.

3. TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION

THE TECHNIQUE of Eastern meditation known as "Transcendental Meditation" (or "TM" for short) has attained such popularity in a few years, especially in America, and is advocated in such an outrageously flippant tone,

that any serious student of contemporary religious currents will be inclined at first to dismiss it as merely an over-inflated product of American advertising and showmanship. But this would be a mistake, for in its serious claims it does not differ markedly from Yoga and Zen, and a close look at its techniques reveals it as perhaps more authentically "Eastern" than either of the somewhat artificial syncretisms, "Christian Yoga" and "Christian Zen."

According to one standard account of this movenent,* "Transcendental Meditation" was brought to America (where it has had its most spectacular success) by a rather "unorthodox" Indian Yogi, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, and began to grow noticeably about 1961. In 1967 it received widespread publicity when the popular singers known as the "Beatles" were converted to it and gave up drugs; but they soon abandoned the movement (although they continued to meditate), and the Maharishi hit his low point the next year when his American tour, together with another convert singing group called the "Beach Boys," was abandoned as a financial failure. The movement itself, however, continued to grow, and by 1971 there were some 100,000 meditators following it, with 2000 specially-trained instructors, making it by far the largest movement of "Eastern spirituality" in America, offering a course especially tailored for the American way of life, which has been sympathetically called "a course in how to succeed spiritually without really trying" (p. 17), and by the Maharishi himself as a technique which is "just like brushing your teeth" (p. 104). The Maharishi has been strongly criticized by other Hindu Yogis for cheapening the long tradition of Yoga in India by making this esoteric practice available to the masses for money (the charge is $75 for the course, or $35 for students).

In its aims, presuppositions, and results, "TM" does not differ markedly from "Christian Yoga" or "Christian Zen"; it differs from them chiefly in the simplicity of its techniques and of its whole philosophy, and in the ease with which its results are obtained. Like them, "TM does not require any belief, understanding, moral code, or even agreement with the ideas and philosophy" (p. 104); it is a technique pure and simple, which "is based on the natural tendency of the mind to move toward greater happiness and pleasure.... During transcendental meditation your mind is expected to follow whatever is most natural and most pleasant" (p. 13). "Transcendental meditation is a practice first and a theory afterwards. It is essential at the beginning that an individual does not think intellectually at all" (p. 22).

*All citations in this section are from Jhan Robbins and David Fisher, *Tranquility without Pills (All about Transcendental Meditation)*, Peter H. Wyden, Inc., N.Y., 1972.

The technique which the Maharishi has devised is invariably the same at all "TM" centers throughout the world: After two introductory lectures, one pays the fee and then comes for "initiation," bringing with him a seemingly strange collection of articles, always the same: three pieces of sweet fruit, at least six fresh flowers, and a clean handkerchief (p. 39). These are placed in a basket and taken to the small "initiation room," where they are placed on a table before a portrait of the Maharishi's guru, from whom he received his initiation into yoga; on the same table a candle and incense are burning. The disciple is alone in the room with his teacher, who is himself required to have received initiation and to have been instructed by the Maharishi personally. The ceremony before the portrait lasts for half an hour and is composed of soft singing in Sanscrit (with meaning unknown to the initiate) and a chanting of the names of past "masters" of Yoga; at the end of the ceremony the initiate is given a "mantra," a secret Sanscrit word which he is to repeat ceaselessly during meditation, and which no one is to know except his teacher (42).

Thus the modern agnostic, usually quite unawares, has been introduced to the realm of Hindu religious practices; quite easily he has been made to do something to which his own Christian ancestors, perhaps, had preferred torture and cruel death: he has offered sacrifice to a god, to the deified guru of the Maharishi. On the spiritual plane it may be this sin, rather than the psychic technique itself, that chiefly explains the spectacular success of "TM."

Once he has been initiated, the student of "TM" meditates twice daily for twenty minutes each time (precisely the same amount recommended by the author of *Christian Yoga*), letting the mind wander freely, and repeating the mantra as often as he thinks of it; frequently, one's experiences are checked by his teacher. Quite soon, even on the first attempt, one begins to enter a new level of consciousness, which is neither sleep nor wakefulness: the state of "transcendental meditation." "Transcendental meditation produces a state of consciousness unlike anything we've known before, and closest to that state of Zen developed after many years of intense study" (p. 115). "In contrast to the years that must be spent to master other religious disciplines and Yoga, which offer the same results that TM proponents claim, teachers say TM can be taught in a matter of minutes" (pp. 110-111). Some who have experienced it describe it as a "state of fulfillment" similar to some drug experiences (p. 85), but the Maharishi himself describes it in traditional Hindu terms: "This state lies beyond all seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting — beyond all thinking and feeling. This state of the unmanifested, absolute, pure consciousness of Being is the ultimate state of life" (p. 23). "When an individual has developed the ability to bring this deep state to the conscious level on a permanent basis, he is said to have reached cosmic consciousness, the goal of

all meditators" (p. 25). In the advanced stages of "TM" the basic Yoga positions are taught, but they are not necessary to the success of the basic technique; nor is any ascetic preparation required. Once one has attained the "transcendental state of being," all that is required of one is twenty minutes of meditation twice daily, since this form of meditation is not at all a separate way of life, as in India, but rather a discipline for those who lead an active life. The Maharishi's distinction lies in having brought this state of consciousness to everyone, not just a chosen few.

There are numerous success stories for "TM", which seems to be effective in almost all cases: drug habits are overcome, families are reunited, one becomes healthy and happy; the teachers of TM are constantly smiling, bubbling over with happiness. Generally, TM does not replace other religions, but *strengthens* belief in almost anything; "Christians," whether Protestant or Catholic, also find that it makes their belief and practice more meaningful and deeper (p. 105).

THESE THREE TECHNIQUES of "meditation" are so similar to each other as to be virtually identical in method and goal; and the spirit that underlies them is precisely the spirit of any number of other "spiritual" movements today, from "science of mind" to "scientology." They are all the offspring of a "post-Christian" attitude of mind that is dissatisfied with "traditional Christianity" and seeks some new "religious experience" that can satisfy the "modern soul." This attitude of mind is essentially the same one that, a hundred years ago, produced spiritism, "Christian Science," "New Thought," and various dabblings in Eastern religions. Now, however, a concerted attempt is being made to give this pagan attitude a "Christian" veneer. The "charismatic revival" is also very clearly a part of this pseudo-spiritual orientation, being simply Victorian Pentecostalism adapted to today's denominations. The pagan-sectarian movement of the "spirit" has now had time to work its way into even the most "conservative" church bodies, and ordinary "Christians" now are being presented with "spiritual experiences" as a normal part of the "Christian" life.

Orthodox Christians must be told absolutely to *stay away from these movements.* They have no foundation in Orthodox tradition or practice, but are purely the product of modern sectarianism and spiritism. They not only teach wrongly about spiritual life: they also lead one into a wrong spiritual path whose end is spiritual and psychic disaster, and ultimately the loss of one's soul eternally. The artificial passivity inculcated by all these movements has one purpose: to "open up" a soul to the activity of demons. The goal pursued by them all alike is the same: *demonic initiation.*

The Religion of the Future

IT IS DEEPLY INDICATIVE of the spiritual state of contemporary mankind that these and other experiences of "meditation" are taking root among "Christians." An Eastern religious influence is undeniably at work in such "Christians," but it is only as a result of something much more fundamental: the loss of the very feeling and savor of Christianity, due to which something so alien to Christianity as Eastern "meditation" can take hold of "Christian" souls.

It is, indeed, a mistake to call such souls "Christian" at all. The life of self-centeredness and self-satisfaction lived by modern "Christians" is so all-pervading that it effectively seals them off from any understanding at all of spiritual life; and when such people do undertake "spiritual life," it is only as another form of self-satisfaction. This can be seen quite clearly in the totally false religious ideal both of the "charismatic" movement and the various forms of "Christian meditation": all of them promise (and give very quickly) an experience of "contentment" and "peace." But this is not the Christian ideal at all, which if anything may be summed up as a fierce battle and struggle. The "contentment" and "peace" described in these contemporary "spiritual" movements are quite manifestly the product of spiritual deception, of spiritual self-satisfaction — which is the absolute death of the God-oriented spiritual life. All these forms of "Christian meditation" operate solely on the psychic level and have nothing whatever in common with Christian spirituality. Christian spirituality is formed in the arduous struggle to acquire the eternal Kingdom of Heaven, which fully begins only with the dissolution of this temporal world, and the true Christian struggler never finds repose even in the foretastes of eternal blessedness which might be vouchsafed to him in this life; but the Eastern religions, to which the Kingdom of Heaven has not been revealed, strive only to acquire psychic states which begin and end in this life. It is precisely the "Christian" who has lost the thirst for Heaven who finds satisfaction in the pathological "peace" of meditation and in demonic "charismata."

In our age of apostasy preceding the manifestation of Antichrist, the devil has been loosed for a time (Apoc. 20:7) to work the false miracles which he could not work during the "thousand years" of Grace in the Church of Christ (Apoc. 20:3), and to gather in his hellish harvest of those souls who "received not the love of the truth" (II Thes. 2:10). We can tell that

the time of Antichrist is truly near by the very fact that this satanic harvest is now being reaped not merely among the pagan peoples, who have not heard of Christ, but even more among "Christians" who have lost the savor of Christianity. It is of the very nature of Antichrist to present the kingdom of the devil *as if it were of Christ.* The present-day "charismatic" movement and "Christian meditation" are doubtless *the religion of the future, the religion of the last humanity, the religion of Antichrist,* and their chief "spiritual" function is *to make available to Christians the demonic initiation hitherto restricted to the pagan world.* Let it be that these "religious experiments" are still often of a tentative and groping nature, that there is in them at least as much psychic self-deception as there is a genuinely demonic initiation rite; doubtless not everyone who has successfully "meditated" or thinks he has received the "Baptism of the Spirit" has actually received initiation into the kingdom of satan. But this is the aim of these "experiments," and doubtless the techniques of initiation will become ever more efficient as mankind becomes prepared for them by the attitudes of passivity and openness to new "religious experiences" which are inculcated by these movements.

What has brought humanity — and indeed "Christendom" — to this desperate state? Certainly it is not any overt worship of the devil, which is limited always to a few people; rather, it is something much more subtle, and something fearful for a conscious Orthodox Christian to reflect on: it is *the loss of the grace of God,* which follows on the loss of the savor of Christianity.

In the West, to be sure, the grace of God was lost many centuries ago. Catholics and Protestants today have not tasted of God's grace, and so it is not surprising that they should be unable to discern its demonic counterfeit. But alas! The success of counterfeit spirituality even among Orthodox Christians today reveals how much they also have lost the savor of Christianity and so can no longer distinguish between True Christianity and pseudo-Christianity. For too long have Orthodox Christians taken for granted the precious treasure of their Faith and neglected to put into use the pure gold of its teachings. How many Orthodox Christians even know of the existence of the basic texts of Orthodox spiritual life, which teach precisely how to distinguish between genuine and counterfeit spirituality, texts which give the life and teaching of holy men and women who attained an abundant measure of God's grace in this life? How many have made their own the teaching of the *Lausiac History,* the *Ladder* of St. John, the Homilies of St. Macarius, the Lives of the God-bearing Fathers of the desert?

In the Life of the Great Father of the Egyptian desert, St. Paisius the Great (June 19), we may see a shocking example of how easy it is to lose

the grace of God. Once a disciple of his was walking to a city in Egypt to sell his handiwork. On the way he met a Jew who, seeing his simplicity, began to deceive him, saying: "O beloved, why do you believe in a simple, crucified Man, when he was not at all the awaited Messiah? Another is to come, but not He." The disciple, being weak in mind and simple in heart, began to listen to these words and allowed himself to say: "Perhaps what you say is correct." When he returned to the desert, St. Paisius turned away from him and would not speak a single word to him. Finally, after the disciple's long entreaty, the Saint said to him: "Who are you? I do not know you. This disciple of mine was a Christian and had upon him the grace of Baptism, but you are not such a one; if you are actually my disciple, then the grace of Baptism has left you and the image of a Christian has been removed." The disciple with tears related his conversation with the Jew, to which the Saint replied: "O wretched one! What could be worse and fouler than such words, by which you renounced Christ and His divine Baptism? Now go and weep over yourself as you wish, for you have no place with me; your name is written with those who have renounced Christ, and together with them you will receive judgment and torments." On hearing this judgment the disciple was filled with repentance, and at his entreaty the Saint shut himself up and prayed to the Lord to forgive his disciple this sin. The Lord heard the Saint's prayer and granted him to behold a sign of His forgiveness of the disciple. The Saint then warned the disciple: "O child, give glory and thanksgiving to Christ God together with me, for the unclean, blasphemous spirit has departed from you, and in his place the Holy Spirit has descended upon you, restoring to you the grace of Baptism. And so, guard yourself now, lest out of sloth and carelessness the nets of the enemy should fall upon you again and, having sinned, you should inherit the fire of gehenna."

Significantly, it is among "ecumenical Christians" that the "Charismatic" and "meditation" movements have taken root. The characteristic belief of the heresy of ecumenism is this: that the Orthodox Church is not the one True Church of Christ; that the grace of God is present also in other "Christian" denominations, and even in non-Christian religions; that the narrow path of salvation according to the teaching of the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church is only "one path among many" to salvation; and that the details of one's belief in Christ are of little importance, as is one's membership in any particular church or "jurisdiction." Not all the Orthodox participants in the ecumenical movement believe this entirely (although Protestants and Catholics most certainly do); but by their very participation in this movement, including invariably common prayer with those who believe wrongly about Christ and His Church,

they tell the heretics who behold them: *"Perhaps what you say is correct,"* even as the wretched disciple of St. Paisius did. *No more than this is required for an Orthodox Christian to lose the grace of God*; and what labor it will cost for him to gain it back!

How much, then, must Orthodox Christians walk in the fear of God, trembling lest they lose His grace, which by no means is given to everyone, but only to those who hold the True Faith, lead a life of Christian struggle, and treasure the grace of God which leads them heavenward. And how much more cautiously must Orthodox Christians walk today above all, when they are surrounded by counterfeit Christians, who talk of their own experiences of "grace" and the "Holy Spirit," and even quote abundantly the Scriptures and the Holy Fathers to prove their point! Surely the last times are near, when there will come spiritual deception so persuasive as to *deceive, if it were possible, even the very elect* (Matt. 24:24).

The false prophets of the modern age, including many who are officially "Orthodox," ever more loudly announce the approaching advent of the "new age of the Holy Spirit," the "New Pentecost," the "Omega Point." This is precisely what, in genuine Orthodox prophecy, is called the reign of Antichrist. It is in our own times, today, that this satanic prophecy is beginning to be fulfilled, *with demonic power.*

Against this powerful "religious experience" True Orthodox Christians must now arm themselves in earnest. We must be correct in doctrine, zealous in practice, and above all *fully conscious of what Orthodox Christianity is and how its goal is different from that of all other religions, "Christian" or non-Christian.* The whole contemporary spiritual atmosphere is becoming charged with the power of a demonic initiation experience as the "Mystery of Iniquity" enters its next-to-last stage and begins to take possession of the souls of men — indeed, to take possession of the very Church of Christ, if that were possible.

However, we have the certain promise of the Saviour Himself that the gates of hell will not prevail against His Church (Matt. 16:18), and that for the sake of His elect He will cut short the days of the last great deception which the devil will let loose upon True Orthodox Christians (Matt. 24:22). And in truth, *If God be for us, who can be against us?* (Rom. 8:31) Even in the midst of the cruelest temptations, we are commanded to *be of good cheer; I have overcome the world* (John 16:33). Let us live, even as true Christians of all times have lived, in expectation of the end of all things and the coming of our dear Saviour; for *He that giveth testimony of these things saith: Surely I come quickly. Amen. Come Lord Jesus* (Apoc. 22:20).

The Holy Fathers of Orthodox Spirituality

INTRODUCTION

II HOW TO READ THE HOLY FATHERS

THE PRESENT PATROLOGY will present the Fathers of *Orthodox spirituality*; therefore, its scope and aims are rather different from the ordinary seminary course in Patrology. Our aim in these pages will be twofold: (1) To present the Orthodox theological foundation of spiritual life — the nature and goal of spiritual struggle, the Patristic view of human nature, the character of the activity of Divine grace and human effort, etc.; and (2) to give the practical teaching on living this Orthodox spiritual life, with a characterization of the spiritual states, both good and bad, which one may encounter or pass through in the spiritual struggle. Thus, strictly dogmatic questions concerning the nature of God, the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Procession of the Holy Spirit, and the like, will be touched on only as these are involved in questions of spiritual life; and many Holy Fathers whose writings deal principally with these dogmatic questions and which touch on questions of spiritual life only secondarily, as it were, will not be discussed at all. In a word, this will be primarily a study of *the Fathers of the Philokalia,* that collection of Orthodox spiritual writings which was made at the dawn of the contemporary age, just before the outbreak of the fierce Revolution in France whose final effects we are witnessing in our own days of atheist rule and anarchy.

In the present century there has been a noticeable increase of interest in the *Philokalia* and its Holy Fathers. In particular, the more recent Fathers such as St. Simeon the New Theologian, St. Gregory the Sinaite, and St. Gregory Palamas, have begun to be studied and a few of their writings translated and printed in English and other Western languages. One might even say that in some seminary and academic circles they have "come into fashion," in sharp contrast to the 19th century, when they were not "in fashion" at all even in most Orthodox theological academies (as opposed to the best monasteries, which always preserved their memories as holy and lived by their writings).

But this very fact presents a great danger which must here be emphasized. The "coming into fashion" of the profoundest spiritual writings is by no means necessarily a good thing. In fact, it is far better that the names of these Fathers remain altogether unknown than that they be merely the occupation of rationalist scholars and "crazy converts" who derive no spiritual benefit from them but only increase their senseless pride at "knowing better" about them than anyone else, or — even worse — begin to follow the spiritual instructions in their writings without sufficient preparation and without any spiritual guidance. All of this, to be sure, does not mean that the lover of truth should abandon the reading of the Holy Fathers; God forbid! But it does mean that all of us — scholar, monk, or simple layman — must approach these Fathers with the fear of God, with humility, and with a great distrust of our own wisdom and judgment. We approach them in order to *learn,* and first of all we must admit that for this we require a teacher. And teachers do exist: in our times when the God-bearing Elders have vanished, our teachers must be those Fathers who, especially in the times close to us, have told us specifically how to read — and how not to read — the Orthodox writings on the spiritual life. If the Blessed Elder Paisius Velichkovsky himself, the compiler of the first Slavonic *Philokalia,* was "seized with fear" on learning that such books were to be *printed* and no longer circulated in manuscript form among some few monasteries — then how much the more must we approach them with fear and and understand the cause of his fear, lest there come upon us the spiritual catastrophe which he foresaw.

Blessed Paisius, in his letter to Archimandrite Theodosius of the St. Sophronius Hermitage,* wrote: "Concerning the publication in print of the Patristic books, both in the Greek and Slavonic languages, I am seized both with joy and fear. With joy, because they will not be given over to final obliv-

*From the Optina Edition of the Life and Writings of Elder Paisius, pp. 265-267.

ion, and zealots may the more easily acquire them; with fear, being frightened and trembling lest they be offered, as a thing which can be sold even like other books, not only to monks, but also to all Orthodox Christians, and lest these latter, having studied the work of mental prayer in a self-willed way, without instruction from those who are experienced in it, might fall into deception, and lest because of the deception the vain-minded might blaspheme against this holy and irreproachable work, which has been testified to by very many great Holy Fathers... and lest because of the blasphemies there follow doubt concerning the teaching of our God-bearing Fathers." The practice of the mental Prayer of Jesus, Blessed Paisius continues, is possible *only* under the conditions of monastic obedience.

Few are they, to be sure, in our latter times of feeble ascetic struggle, who strive for the heights of mental prayer (or even know what this might be); but the warnings of Blessed Paisius and other Holy Fathers hold true also for the lesser struggles of many Orthodox Christians today. Anyone who reads the *Philokalia* and other writings of the Holy Fathers, and even many Lives of Saints, will encounter passages about mental prayer, about Divine vision, about deification, and about other exalted spiritual states, and it is essential for the Orthodox Christian to know what he should think and feel about these.

Let us, therefore, see what the Holy Fathers say of this, and of our approach to the Holy Fathers in general.

The Blessed Elder Macarius of Optina (†1860) found it necessary to write a special "Warning to those reading spiritual Patristic books and desiring to practice the mental Prayer of Jesus."* Here this great Father almost of our own century tells us clearly what our attitude should be to these spiritual states: "The holy and God-bearing Fathers wrote about great spiritual gifts not so that anyone might strive indiscriminately to receive them, but so that those who do not have them, hearing about such exalted gifts and revelations which were received by those who were worthy, might acknowledge their own profound infirmity and great insufficiency, and might involuntarily be inclined to humility, which is more necessary for those seeking salvation than all other works and virtues." Again, St. John of the Ladder (6th century) writes: "Just as a pauper, seeing the royal treasures, all the more acknowledges his own poverty; so also the spirit, reading the accounts of the great deeds of the Holy Fathers, involuntarily is all the more humbled in its way of thought" (Step 26:25). Thus, our first approach to the writings of the Holy Fathers must be one of *humility*.

*In his collected *Letters to Monks*, Moscow, 1862, pp. 358-380 (in Russian).

Again, St. John of the Ladder writes: "To admire the labors of the Saints is praiseworthy; to emulate them is soul-saving; but to desire suddenly to become their imitators is senseless and impossible" (Step 4:42). St. Isaac the Syrian (6th century) teaches in his second Homily (as summarized by Elder Macarius of Optina, *op. cit.*, p. 364): "Those who seek in prayer sweet spiritual sensations with expectation, and especially those who strive prematurely for vision and spiritual contemplation, fall into the deception of the enemy and into the realm of darkness and the obscurity of the mind, being abandoned by the help of God and given over to demons for mockery because of their prideful seeking above their measure and worth." Thus, we must come to the Holy Fathers with the humble intention of *beginning the spiritual life at the lowest step*, and not even dreaming of ourselves attaining those exalted spiritual states, which are totally beyond us. St. Nilus of Sora (†1508), a great Russian Father of more recent times, writes in his *Monastic Rule* (ch. 2), "What shall we say of those who, in their mortal body, have tasted immortal food, who have been found worthy to receive in this transitory life a portion of the joys that await us in our heavenly homeland?... We who are burdened with many sins and preyed upon by passions are unworthy even of hearing such words. Nevertheless, placing our hope in the grace of God, we are encouraged to keep the words of the holy writings in our minds, so that we may at least grow in awareness of the degradation in which we wallow."

To aid our humble intention in reading the Holy Fathers, we must begin with the elementary Patristic books, those which teach the "ABC's." A 6th-century novice of Gaza once wrote to the great clairvoyant Elder, St. Barsanuphius, much in the spirit of the inexperienced Orthodox student of today: "I have dogmatic books and when reading them I feel that my mind is transferred from passionate thoughts to the contemplation of dogmas." To this the holy Elder replied: "I would not want you to be occupied with these books, because they exalt the mind on high; but it is better to study the words of the Elders which humble the mind downward. I have said this not in order to belittle the dogmatic books, but I only give you counsel; for foods are different." (*Questions and Answers*, no. 544). An important purpose of this Patrology will be precisely to indicate which Patristic books are more suitable for beginners, and which should be left until later.

Again, different Patristic books on the spiritual life are suitable for Orthodox Christians in different conditions of life: that which is suitable especially for solitaries is not directly applicable to monks living the common life; that which applies to monks in general will not be directly relevant for

laymen; and in every condition, the spiritual food which is suitable for those with some experience may be entirely indigestible for beginners. Once one has achieved a certain balance in spiritual life by means of active practice of God's commandments within the discipline of the Orthodox Church, by fruitful reading of the more elementary writings of the Holy Fathers, and by spiritual guidance from living fathers—then one can receive much spiritual benefit from all the writings of the Holy Fathers, applying them to one's own condition of life. Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov has written concerning this: "It has been noticed that novices can never adapt books to their condition, but are invariably drawn by the tendency of the book. If a book gives counsels on silence and shows the abundance of spiritual fruits that are gathered in profound silence, the beginner invariably has the strongest desire to go off into solitude, to an uninhabited desert. If a book speaks of unconditional obedience under the direction of a Spirit-bearing Father, the beginner will inevitably develop a desire for the strictest life in complete submission to an Elder. God has not given to our time either of these two ways of life. But the books of the Holy Fathers describing these states can influence a beginner so strongly that out of inexperience and ignorance he can easily decide to leave the place where he is living and where he has every convenience to work out his salvation and make spiritual progress by putting into practice the evangelical commandments, for an impossible dream of a perfect life pictured vividly and alluringly in his imagination." Therefore, he concludes: "Do not trust your thoughts, opinions, dreams, impulses or inclinations, even though they offer you or put before you in an attractive guise the most holy monastic life" (*The Arena*, ch. 10). What Bishop Ignatius says here about monks refers also to laymen, with allowance made for the different conditions of lay life. Particular comments will be made at the end of this Introduction concerning spiritual reading for laymen.

St. Barsanuphius indicates in another Answer (no. 62) something else very important for us who approach the Holy Fathers much too academically: "One who is taking care for his salvation should not at all ask [the Elders, i.e., read Patristic books] for the acquiring only of knowledge, for *knowledge puffeth up* (I Cor. 8:1), as the Apostle says; but it is most fitting to ask about the passions and about how one should live one's life, that is, how to be saved; for this is necessary, and leads to salvation." Thus, one is not to read the Holy Fathers out of mere curiosity or as an academic exercise, without the active intention to practice what they teach, according to one's spiritual level. Modern academic "theologians" have clearly enough demonstrated that it is possible to have much abstract information about the Holy Fathers without any spiritual knowledge at all. Of such ones St. Macarius the Great says (Hom-

ily 17:9): "Just as one clothed in beggarly garments might see himself in sleep as a rich man, but on waking from sleep again sees himself poor and naked, so also those who deliberate about the spiritual life seem to speak logically, but inasmuch as that of which they speak is not verified in the mind by any kind of experience, power, and confirmation, they remain in a kind of fantasy."

One test of whether our reading of the Holy Fathers is academic or real is indicated by St. Barsanuphius in his answer to a novice who found that he became haughty and proud when speaking of the Holy Fathers (Answer no. 697): "When you converse about the life of the Holy Fathers and about their Answers, you should condemn yourself, saying: Woe is me! How can I speak of the virtues of the Fathers, while I myself have acquired nothing like that and have not advanced at all? And I live, instructing others for their benefit; how can there not be fulfilled in me the word of the Apostle: *Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?*" (Rom. 2:21.) Thus, one's constant attitude toward the teaching of the Holy Fathers must be one of *self-reproach.*

Finally, we must remember that the whole purpose of reading the Holy Fathers is, not to give us some kind of "spiritual enjoyment" or confirm us in our own righteousness or superior knowledge or "contemplative" state, but solely to aid us in the practice of the active path of virtue. Many of the Holy Fathers discuss the distinction between the "active" and the "contemplative" (or, more properly, "noetic") life, and it should be emphasized here that this does not refer, as some might think, to any artificial distinction between those leading the "ordinary" life of "outward Orthodoxy" or mere "good deeds," and an "inward" life cultivated only by monastics or some intellectual elite; not at all. There is only one Orthodox spiritual life, and it is lived by every Orthodox struggler, whether monastic or layman, whether beginner or advanced; "action" or "practice" (*praxis* in Greek) is the way, and "vision" (*theoria*) or "deification" is the end. Almost all the Patristic writings refer to the life of *action*, not the life of *vision*; when the latter is mentioned, it is to remind us of the goal of our labors and struggles, which in this life is tasted deeply only by a few of the great Saints, but in its fullness is known only in the age to come. Even the most exalted writings of the *Philokalia,* as Bishop Theophanes the Recluse wrote in the preface of the final volume of the Russian-language *Philokalia*, "have had in view not the noetic, but almost exclusively the active life."

Even with this introduction, to be sure, the Orthodox Christian living in our century of puffed-up knowledge will not escape some of the pitfalls lying in wait for one who wishes to read the Holy Fathers in their full Orthodox meaning and context. Therefore, let us stop here, before beginning the Patrology itself, and examine briefly some of the mistakes which have been made by contemporary readers of the Holy Fathers, with the intention of thereby forming a yet clearer notion of how *not* to read the Holy Fathers.

Next Issue: Introduction, III: How NOT to Read the Holy Fathers.

Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov

1807 - 1867

A GREAT FATHER of recent times in the tradition of Blessed Paisius Velichkovsky, being a disciple of Starets Leonid (Lev) of Optina, he broke through the boundaries of modern knowledge and found the higher knowledge of the patristic tradition, handing down its unchanging truths in language understood by modern men. In the six volumes of his collected works, as well as by his outstanding personality, he gave inspiration to strugglers in monasticism in these last times, and fought especially the false Christianity of Papalism and modern knowledge. After his death he appeared in heavenly light, amidst other heavenly dwellers, and said: "Everything written in my books is the truth," granting healing to the sick.

GENERAL VIEW OF NIAMETS MONASTERY AMONG THE MOLDAVIAN HILLS

59. THE DIFFICULTY OF THE DWELLING AT SEKOUL. THE PETITION TO THE COMMANDER FOR THE GRANTING OF A LARGE MONASTERY. 60. THE COMMAND TO TRANSFER TO NIAMETS. 61. THE ELDER'S UNCONSOLABLE GRIEF OVER THIS.

HOWEVER, BEING persuaded by the needs of the brethren, by the great poverty and confinement of the cells, and by the prayerful counsel of the spiritual Fathers, the Elder wrote a petition to the Prince Constantine Muruz concerning the great need they had for cells. And the pious Prince, having received the petition, inquired of his Senate as to what kind of monastery Sekoul was, in which Elder Paisius was dwelling together with his brethren. Then one of the chief Senators, who had previously been in the monastery of Sekoul and knew well everything about it, replied: "The monastery of Sekoul is confining and the church is small. It was not built for such a community of brethren, and it is in a most difficult place; for the path to it is rocky and most cruel and unsuitable for the transport from outside of the necessities of life."

The Life and Ascetic Labors of Our Father, Elder Paisius, Archimandrite of the Holy Moldavian Monasteries of Niamets and Sekoul. Part Eleven.

THE TRANSFER TO THE MONASTERY OF NIAMETS

And the Christ-loving Prince with compassion said to the Senators: "Do we have within our realm such a monastery in which this Elder Paisius might find repose?" And they replied: "In all our realm there is no church greater or more spacious, or more convenient of access, than the monastery of Niamets, which is two-hours' distance from Sekoul." Then the Prince rejoiced and wrote to the Elder, commanding him to transfer to the monastery of Niamets without any deliberation, no matter what anyone might say.

But when this epistle came to Paisius, and he saw in it the unexpected command, his soul was greatly disturbed, peace fled from him, and limitless grief encompassed his soul, and he wept unconsolably, unto exhaustion, with bitter tears; and he was in perplexity what to do. The brethren also were greatly disturbed, and above all the spiritual Fathers, who were true zealots according to God, who loved the quiet and humble monastic life, and with pain desired the good estate of the souls of the brethren, over which, moreover, they had labored much; these were bitterly pained together with our Father over the destruction of souls that was to be.

And what happened then? The great sorrow and grief increased, such as our Father had not known from his very birth; he wept bitterly and lamented with pain unconsolably, already foreseeing the destruction and ruin of the brethren's state of soul. For the Elder's common instruction of the brethren, which he performed when all were gathered together in the refectory, would have to be eliminated, both because it would be impossible for all to gather together inasmuch as they would be separated [for some of the brethren were to remain in Sekoul], and because there would be present [in Niamets] worldly guests, great persons, and it would be impossible to forbid them to come in order to listen. And thus an end would be put to the Elder's moral instruction

which he always added to the end of the common instruction, concerning the correction of the stumblings which occurred among the brethren, concerning which, in accordance with Scripture, there should be an accusation of the sinners before the whole assembly, without revealing the guilty ones, filling them with the fear of God so that the guilty ones might be shamed and be corrected in fear, and the innocent might guard themselves better and be more cautious. And he grieved bitterly over these things and wept without ceasing day and night.

62. The lamentation of the brethren of Niamets and their complaint to Paisius.

AND WHEN THE ELDER was preparing to write to the Prince a prayerful refusal, behold, there came to the Elder from the monastery of Niamets its superiors, and falling down before him with fervent entreaty and humble petition, with many tears, they began to entreat him not to offend them and not to destroy their way of life in their old age, "lest," they said, "we weep against you unto death." And scarcely could our Father contain himself from his sorrow in hearing these words which wounded his holy soul, which in truth was filled with love of God and brothers, was meek, and desired the benefit and salvation of the whole world.

And thus did he answer them, weeping bitterly before them and saying with tears: "You see, holy Fathers" — showing them the letter from the Prince — "behold the cause of our and your disturbance and grief; but may Christ God inform you that never has it even entered my thoughts to perform such a lawless and violent deed and grieve your souls, and fall under eternal condemnation for transgressing God's commandments. You yourselves know that we hold even Sekoul not by any violence of ours; rather, the former Abbot, Father Niphon of blessed memory, seeing our disturbance under the Papists, himself called us out of love to come to him, he himself desiring to remain with us, and he ended his life here piously. Then, in loving harmony we wrote to the authorities and received what we requested." And he said to them: "How could I have dared to perform such an evil deed? And with what countenance might I behold your holy faces, having my conscience as my judge and accuser for offending my neighbor? And how might I approach the Altar of God to receive Communion of the fearful and Divine Mysteries, having those who weep and cry out against me to the Lord for my violence? May this not be, may it not be. I shall write to the Prince and entreat and implore him with tears to leave us and you to dwell in peace in our own monasteries; for here, by God's grace, we have profound peace."

63. The petition of refusal to the Commander.
64. Confirmation of the command to transfer to Niamets.

Being reassured by these and many other words, the superiors of Niamets departed. And our blessed Father wrote to the Prince a most tearful entreaty. What moving and persuasive words did he not employ! What good reasons did he not present! What petitions and tearful entreaties from the whole community of the brethren, refusing the monastery of Niamets and giving thanks to God for the silent and quiet habitation of the monastery of Sekoul, did he not offer in this letter! Likewise did he set forth, with humility and tears, all the harm of soul that would follow for the brethren, and the destruction of their quiet and silence, and many similar things that would occur. Having written thus, he sent with this petition the monastery's chief spiritual father of the Moldavian tongue, the most reverent Irenarchus, who knew also the Greek tongue, and another together with him; and he awaited a reply in hope of receiving what he had requested.

The emissaries came with the letter to the Prince, and the letter having been read to him, they began to declare also with spoken words concerning everything in detail; and falling down at his feet with tears, they presented to him also the many soul-harming reasons [for the Elder's refusal], and they entreated him to leave the Elder and the brethren to dwell in Sekoul without disturbance and without harm. But by no means were they able to persuade him; and he commanded that a letter be written to the Elder, in which to the rest of the words he added this by his own hand: "Show obedience; go to Niamets without any deliberation." And having confirmed it with his signature and seal, he gave it to the spiritual Fathers and let them go in peace.

65. The transfer to Niamets.

Then the emissaries returned with the letter from the Prince, and when our Father read it and saw what was written in it, with the command to "show obedience; go to Niamets" — he wept bitterly and did not know what to do. And to such an extent did his measureless grief increase and take possession of his soul, that he could neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep, foreseeing the utterly final destruction of the souls of the brethren; and he became most exhausted in body. We all were in fear and grief and great disturbance lest he die from excessive grief. (If some have written differently of this, namely, that the Elder accepted the monastery of Niamets without such grief, it is

because they do not know well what happened then. But I, Metrophanes, having been an eyewitness of all these events, know in truth that all was just as I have here described it.)

Then, the eldest of the spiritual Fathers and brethren having gathered together, they went to the Elder, who was sick, and began with tears to entreat him to leave off such measureless grief and strengthen himself with food. And they said to him: "What profit is it to us if you should die prematurely and we should be left orphans without you? Then what would we do?" And he, being a man of prudence, saw that his spiritual children were so greatly afflicted, were weeping and disturbed, and knew that his death would be an immense misfortune for them worse than their destruction. He was silent a little, and then raised his mental eyes unto the Lord, sighing heavily, and burst into bitter tears and said: "We are pressed about, brethren, on all sides." Then he moved from his bed and arose, making the sign of the Cross, bowed down to the icon of the Most Pure Mother of God, and said: "May the will of God be done! Let us go, even against our will." And having been strengthened a little by food, he was unable to sleep; and having called three spiritual Fathers and several of the brethren, he sent them to the monastery of Niamets and gave them the letter from the Prince, saying that it should be read there and that a cell should be prepared for him and whatever else was needful for the priests and singers. And the brethren, having done what was commanded them, returned.

Then the Elder assigned the brethren, some to go with him to Niamets, and some to remain in Sekoul; and he assigned to govern in the latter place one of the spiritual Fathers, Hilarion by name. Then, entering the church, he prayed to the Lord with tears, kissing the holy icons, and he gave to all who were to remain, who were weeping, his blessing, comforting them and saying: "Let everyone in any grief and need of soul or body come to me without hindrance (for it was only a two-hours' journey from there to Niamets). And weeping bitterly, he set out on the journey, and because of his extreme old age and infirmity he allowed the use of just one horse for what was necessary; for even until his death he despised the love of glory. And we, like bees, surrounding his one-horse carriage, went on foot, taking a little sweet enjoyment in his spiritual conversation. Some of us were only accompanying him, and some were going with him to stay: and we came to the monastery of Niamets on the very eve of the feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God in the year 1779.

Having entered the church there, after "Meet It Is" had been sung, our Father venerated the holy icons; and coming to the Wonderworking Icon of the Most Holy Mother of God, he wept much, entrusting himself and the brethren to Her intercession and safekeeping, to Her protection and guidance; and placing all hope in everything, after God, in Her, he kissed the Icon with tears. Then, going out of the church, he came to his cell and rested a little; but he could not fall asleep because of his great sorrow, having already been five days and nights without sleep. Being in time for the Vigil, even if with great labor due to his illness and weakness, he came to church and listened, sitting down, to the Divine service, entreating the Most Pure Mother of God that he might be able to sleep a little. And when Vespers had ended and Matins had begun, sleep began to come to him; and going out of the church, he entered his cell and soon lay down, and he fell asleep and slept for three hours. And when he awoke from sleep, his head felt better, and he felt somewhat sounder in body, and all his sorrow had departed; wherefore he offered thanksgiving with tears to Christ and His Most Pure Mother.

66. Acceptance of the Monastery of Niamets.

After the Liturgy our Father called together the previous superiors of Niamets and conversed graciously with them alone, promising to give them repose in everything until their death and in no way to do violence to their will. And he accepted from their hands what they themselves gave over to him, without examining them about anything. And thus they were profoundly reconciled, and after some years they received the Great Schema, and having lived piously, they departed to the Lord. Only some few of the brethren who had been there previously went away, while the rest were joined to the community, and from two communities a single one was made, and peace of soul reigned. Then the Elder wrote to the Prince about his acceptance of the monastery of Niamets and the reconciliation of the communities into a single one, and he informed him of their great want of cells.

And when this letter was read to the Prince, he greatly rejoiced and commanded that a document be written and confirmed, in their own hand, by the signatures of the Prince, the Metropolitan, and the Senate. For himself, he wrote to the Elder, thanking him for his obedience and promising to give help for the cells and every other need, and he gave this letter together with the document to the brethren who had been sent to him.

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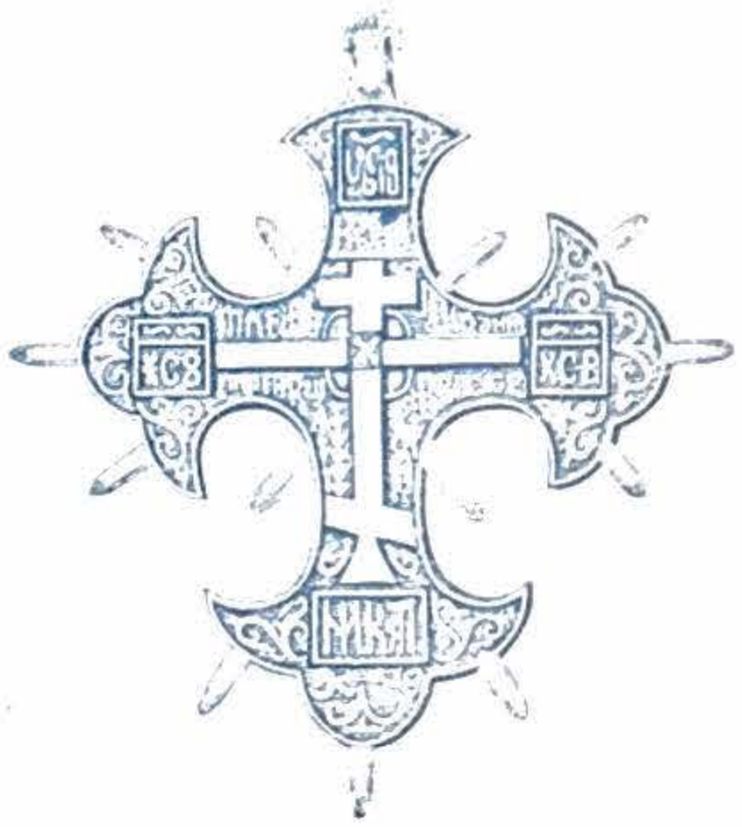

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